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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the various limitations of several multicultural education initiatives and explores the conditions necessary for making multicultural education actually work. The conditions examined include the centrality of first language maintenance and the reconstituting of curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation, and organization at the school level. In addition, the paper discusses the controversy of multiculturalism versus antiracist education and assimilation. The multicultural educational program initiated at the Richmond Road School in Auckland, New Zealand is offered as an example of what can be achieved when multicultural education is combined with a critically conceived approach to whole-school reform. Reasons for its success are examined, focusing on the facts that: (1) the various school structures necessary to establishing an effective approach to multicultural education have been developed over many years; (2) the change process has involved staff cooperatively and collaboratively; (3) a high degree of theoretical literacy in multiculturalism was developed among teachers; and (4) a conversancy with theory resulted in an approach to multicultural education that was considered workable for staff and served the interests of all concerned. It is concluded that the structural changes implemented at Richmond Road demonstrate that multicultural education can be effectively reconceived in order to make a difference for minority children. (Contains 54 references.) (GLR)

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Beyond Basket Weaving: Multicultural Education and Whole-School Reform[1]

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Abstract

This paper outlines the various limitations of many multicultural education initiatives and explores the conditions necessary for making multicultural education actually work. These conditions include the centrality of first language maintenance and the reconstituting of curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation and organisation at the school-level.

Richmond Road School in Auckland, New Zealand is discussed as an example of what can be achieved when multicultural education is combined with a critically conceived approach to whole-school reform.

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Introduction

For decades now, ethnic minority groups have been singled out in many western countries as a 'cause for concern' because of their relative educational 'underachievement' in relation to majority group children. Initially it was thought that the language(s) and culture(s) of minority children were the cause of their educational difficulties, and the policy of *assimilation* -- with its emphasis on incorporation into the dominant culture and language -- was championed as a means of redressing this. In this approach, minority cultures and languages were seen as impediments which, if they could not be stamped out in the wider society (although some might have wished it), could at least be removed from the realms of the school. Accordingly, the teaching of English was emphasised, and children were encouraged to (and, in some cases, coerced into) leaving their own culture(s) and language(s) 'at the school gate'. As John Porter, one of the great advocates of assimilation in Canada has argued, the benefits of such an approach were that it placed

> emphasis on *individualistic* achievement in the context of a new nation with *universalistic* standards of judgement ... it meant forgetting ancestry and attempting to establish a society of equality where ethnic origin did not matter. (1975: 293; my emphasis)

The unquestioned endorsement of individualism (a specifically western cultural conception), and the assumption of universalism apparent in Porter's comment, betray the ethnocentricity of the assimilationist account. It is the needs of 'the nation' -- which is seen as a unitary whole, politically and culturally indivisible -- for which education is preparing students. Accordingly, minority groups should be absorbed into that nation's 'culture' (assuming this to be, of course, the culture of the dominant group) as quickly as possible in order to be able to contribute fully to the creation and maintenance of society (Mullard, 1982). Conversely, maintaining ethnic minority language(s) and culture(s) is seen as a direct threat to the stability of society. As Mullard argues, in a British context:

> the assimilationist perspective was seen ... as one which embodied a set of beliefs about stability. The teaching of English along with a programme of cultural indoctrination and subordination ... would help in short to neutralize sub-cultural affinities and influences within the school. A command of the dominant group's language would not only mean [B]lacks could 'benefit' from the 'education' provided in school, but, more significantly, it would help counter the threat an alien group apparently poses to the stability of the school system and, on leaving, to society at large. Closely related to this viewpoint, as both a political and educational strategy for implementation and as a further base assumption of the assimilationist model, rested a notion of coercion and control (*ibid*: 123-124)

However, assimilation failed to deliver for minority children, exactly because -- many now think -- it demeaned and excluded minority languages and cultures. The results of assimilation, in fact, simply entrenched ethnic minority disadvantage. As McCarthy observes, of the United States, 'the ideology of assimilation clearly benefited white Americans. Over time, white "ethnics" were able to share in the rewards of the society from which black Americans were systematically excluded.' (1990: 40)

This increasing disenchantment with assimilationist policies, particularly among minority groups, led in the 1960s to an advocacy for an *integrationist* model of education, and the associated notion of *equality of educational opportunity*. Integration attempted to recognise rather than exclude aspects of minority cultures in the curriculum. It was less crude than assimilation in its conceptions of culture but a clear cultural hierarchy continued to underpin the model. While well intentioned, minority cultures were still assumed to be somehow deficient, or at least inferior to the dominant culture. This 'deficit' view also resulted in the continued perception of minority groups as educational 'problems'. As Mullard again comments:

> The assumptions, then, of cultural superiority, social stability, and shared values and beliefs still figure prominently in [integration] .... All the integrationist model affords, as possibly distinct from its predecessor, is that, while immutable, these dominant values and beliefs can in effect be reinforced through following a policy of mutual tolerance and reserved respect for other cultural values and beliefs. (1982: 127)

The overt ethnocentrism of assimilation simply became a covert aspect of integration, thus making the latter policy's associated advocacy of equality of educational opportunity for minority groups somewhat ironic. Equal opportunity, in practice, meant equal opportunity only for those whose ideas and values conformed to the dominant group's culture and integration's short lived educational tenure suggests that minority groups were quick to see the inconsistency.[2] More durable, however, has been the subsequent promotion of cultural pluralism, and particularly its most popular form of expression, multicultural education.[3]

The Multicultural Panacea: Claims and Counter Claims

Both assimilation and integration -- despite their best intentions -- did little, if anything, to change the educational position of minority children. Minority pupils remained educationally disadvantaged in relation to their majority peers. Their singular lack of success has consequently seen many turn to a 'multicultural' approach to education as the means to improving the educational performance of minority children.[4] Targeting the monoculturalism of previous assimilationist and integrationist policies as the real cause of minority children's educational underachievement, advocates of multicultural education have argued instead for the fostering of cultural pluralism at the school level. As Modgil *et al.* argue, 'multiculturalists have sought to establish a new educational consensus. Rejecting assimilationist and ethnocentric philosophies of the 1960s, many have argued for a form of education that is pluralist in orientation and positively embraces a multiethnic perspective.' (1986: 1) The British School Council's position on multicultural education, as outlined by Craft, is typical of such a view:

> In a society which believes in cultural pluralism, the challenge for teachers is to meet the particular needs of pupils from different religions, linguistic and ethnic sub-cultures.... All pupils need to acquire knowledge and sensitivity to other cultural groups through a curriculum which offers opportunities to study other religions, languages and cultures.... At all stages this may enhance pupils' attitudes and performance at school through development of a sense of identity and self-esteem. (1982; cited in Crozier, 1989: 67-68)

Banks, in discussing the North American scene, makes even bolder claims for multicultural education when he argues:

> As long as the achievement gap between Blacks and Whites and Anglos and Hispanics is wide, ethnic conflicts and tensions in schools will continue. Improving the academic achievement of ethnic minority students and developing and implementing a multicultural curriculum that reflects the cultures, experiences, and perspectives of diverse ethnic groups will help reduce the racial conflict and tension in U.S. schools. (1988: 12)

It seems that, as Bullivant -- a leading Australian writer in the field -- observes, 'for the time being educationists in ... pluralist societies have adopted, or are moving into, multicultural education as the claimed panacea to cure the ills that beset their educational systems.' (1986: 33) Olneck, a North American commentator, argues along similar lines that 'multicultural education is characterized by ringing proclamations celebrating

differences and endorsing the cultivation and maintenance of distinctive cultural identities' (1990: 158); a 'new and better way' of achieving educational change for minority students.

The increasing popularity of multicultural education has drawn criticisms from conservatives and radicals alike. Conservative opponents worry that a multicultural approach to education is too 'political' and simply panders to minorities, while also detracting from the 'basics' of education. Radical critics, on the other hand, think it is not political enough, and see it as merely an attempt to placate minorities while leaving unchanged the wider social issues (like racism) which continue to disadvantage them, both in schools and in society (Parekh, 1986). Like assimilation and integration, they suggest that multicultural education has done little to change the position of minority groups within education (see, for example, Modgil *et al.*, 1986; Olneck, 1990; Troyna, 1987; McCarthy, 1990).

I believe that the radical analysis has it right. The field of multicultural education -- *as it is popularly conceived and practised* -- is, like its predecessors, riven with theoretical inconsistencies and a seemingly terminal inability to translate its emancipatory intentions into actual practice. Multicultural education may be, arguably, more benign than its assimilationist and integrationist predecessors but, beyond its well meaning rhetoric, it is no more effective. It simply continues to perpetuate, in another guise, a system of education which disadvantages minority children. Before discussing if and how these difficulties can be overcome, it is useful to briefly outline how the theory and practice of multicultural education has arrived at this apparent impasse.

The Problem of Definition

The theoretical difficulties apparent within the area are best illustrated by the enormous amount of conceptual confusion over the actual terms 'multiculturalism' and 'multicultural education'. Gibson, an early commentator on the multicultural debate in North America, comments to this end that, 'in reviewing the literature on multicultural education, we find that program proponents have provided no systematic delineation of their views, and that all too frequently program statements are riddled with vague and emotional rhetoric.' (1976: 16) The populist rhetoric associated with multicultural education, it would seem,

obscures definitions. As Sleeter and Grant state, in their more recent review of multicultural education in North America, 'over the years it has become clear that it means different things to different people.' (1987: 421-422) Similarly, conceptual confusion, ambivalence and, at times, outright antagonism have characterised the debates in Britain between multicultural education and antiracist education (see below). Distinctions of terminology have, consequently, featured prominently in the British debates (see, for example, Cole, 1986; Fenton, 1982; Jeffcoate, 1984; Mullard, 1982; Nixon, 1984). Likewise, in New Zealand education, discussions on multicultural education throughout the 1980s, particularly with regard to the much vaunted initiative of taha Māori have proved to be disparate and inconclusive (see Hingangaroa Smith, 1986; 1990; Irwin, 1988; 1989; Simon, 1986; Tait, 1988).[5] As the New Zealand Department of Education noted, somewhat prophetically it would seem, in a report written at the beginning of the 1980s:

> in identifying research in multicultural education as one of the priorities for educational research, the Department is conscious that it is seeking to plant something in ground whose potential is by no means fully understood or appreciated. (1981; cited in Irwin, 1989: 6)

And such would still seem to be the case, both in New Zealand and elsewhere. Banks has summarised these concerns in his observation that multicultural education remains 'an inconclusive concept used to describe a wide variety of school practices, programs and materials designed to help children from diverse groups to experience educational equality.' (1986: 222) Bullivant (1981) has taken this further by going so far as to suggest that the proliferation of definitions ascribed to the terms 'multiculturalism' and 'multicultural education' has led, not only to confusion about what the terms mean, but to a questioning of whether they retain any generalisable meaning at all. Put simply, the problem is that no-one knows exactly what 'multicultural education' is.

'Benevolent Multiculturalism'

If a consensus can be reached on what constitutes the *raison d'etre* of multicultural education (and, in light of the above discussion, this would seem to be no easy task) it would appear to centre around the rhetoric of cultural pluralism. Three somewhat dubious claims emerge from this rhetoric:

> that learning about their own cultures will enhance the self esteem of ethnic minority children and will consequently improve their educational achievement;

> that ethnic recognition in the curriculum will lead to greater equality of educational opportunity for ethnic minority children and;
>
> that learning about other cultures and traditions will reduce discrimination within, and eventually outside of the classroom (see Bullivant, 1981).

Crozier has argued for a similar 'common code' in her discussion of multicultural education in Britain. She suggests that four common aims can be identified in the British literature:

> 1. to promote and develop tolerance;
> 2. to improve [B]lack children's self-identity, to develop 'cultural pride';
> 3. to break down the ignorance of white children and through this to put an end to 'racism' which is (sometimes) fostered by ignorance; and
> 4. to give value and respect to 'their' [minority] cultures. (1989: 67)

And Metge (1990), summarising the debates which have occurred in New Zealand, identifies three broad principles of: a promotion of a positive view of cultural diversity; encouragement of cross-cultural communication and understanding; and acceptance by majority as well as minority group members of the responsibility for change.

Admirable as these aims might appear, they have led to the dominance of 'benevolent' or 'naive' multiculturalism (Gibson, 1976). Benevolent multiculturalism emphasises the *lifestyles* of minority children rather than their *life chances*; what some have termed the 'spaghetti' or 'basket weaving' approach to multicultural education. In such an approach, an 'ethnic' component simply gets tacked on to the existing (monocultural) curriculum. This does little to challenge or change the cultural transmission of the dominant group within schooling. As Bullivant argues, 'selections for the curriculum that encourage children from ethnic backgrounds to learn about their cultural heritage, languages, histories, customs and other aspects of their life-styles have little bearing on their equality of educational opportunity and life-chances.' (1986: 42)[6]

Benevolent multiculturalism places too much importance on cultural and ethnic *identity*, and too little on what it is that determines successful negotiations for ethnic minority groups in their interactions with the dominant group(s) in society, and within education (Bullivant, 1981). In so doing, pluralism is confused with diversity and, as Olneck observes, what results is that 'multicultural education as ordinarily practiced tends to merely "insert" minorities into the dominant cultural frame of reference ... to be

transmitted within dominant cultural forms ... and to leave obscured and intact existing cultural hierarchies and criteria of stratification...' (1990: 163) Hulmes, a British commentator, argues along similar lines:

> pluralism [construed as simply diversity] does not extend the right to choose in matters of most serious consequence, and multi-cultural education (however well-intentioned) tends to conceal this limitation. *In important issues such as the content of the curriculum, teaching methods, assessment, the transmission of values from one generation to the next and the induction of the young into the adult community, the educational questions have already been answered.* The comprehensiveness of constituent cultures is subordinated at critical points to the practical judgement of an established educational philosophy which is assumed to be logically prior to all others. The voices of minority cultures are effectively ignored, except when they speak at other levels of cultural activity such as music, dance, cuisine and social customs. (1989: 13; my emphasis)

It seems that when questions of power come into the analysis the equation of diversity with equality begins to look doubtful. Furthermore, when attention turns from lifestyles to life chances the rhetoric of cultural pluralism loses its veneer of liberalism and is exposed as ethnic hegemony (Burtonwood, 1986). The assertions -- that raising the self esteem of minority children will result in their educational emancipation, and that programmes highlighting cultural difference will ameliorate the structural disadvantages that minority children face -- prove to be hollow in a benevolent multicultural education. The net result may actually work against the life chances of children from minority backgrounds. The valuing of cultural differences, while appearing to act solely for the best interests of ethnic groups, simply masks the unchanged nature of power relations.[7]

Multicultural versus Antiracist Education

The most consistent critics of multicultural education along these lines have been radical theorists associated with the antiracist education movement. These theorists are primarily British since much of the debate between antiracist and multicultural education has been conducted here (see, in particular, Carrington & Short, 1989; Figueroa, 1991; Sarup, 1986; Troyna, 1987). However, a number of North American commentators, notably Cameron McCarthy (1990), have also made a significant contribution to the antiracist position.

Advocates of antiracist education are particularly concerned with the inadequate conception of 'culture' identified in much of the multicultural education literature. Hatcher, for example, argues that while 'culture is the central concept around which the new multiculturalism is constructed, the concept is given only a taken-for-granted common sense meaning, impoverished both theoretically and in terms of concrete lived experience. It is a concept of culture innocent of class.' (1987: 188) The consequent emphases on changing individual attitudes, fostering cultural understanding and awareness, and raising the self esteem of minority students in benevolent multicultural education reflect this ingenuousness because they fail to address the wider societal issue of racism. Even approaches which move beyond the incrementalism of benevolent multiculturalism to advocate for wholesale changes to the curriculum are not enough. As McCarthy summarises it:

> radical school theorists have, with good reason, criticized the tendency of ... multicultural proponents to lean towards an unwarranted optimism about the impact of the multicultural curriculum on the social and economic futures of minority students.... For these reformist educators, educational change hinges almost exclusively on the reorganization of the school curriculum. But as Troyna & Williams (1986) have pointed out, attempts at the reorganization of the curriculum to include more historically and culturally sensitive materials on minorities have not affected the unequal relations that exist between blacks and whites in school and in society. (1990: 53, 54)

As I have already made clear, this is a position with which I entirely agree. However, in McCarthy's analysis, and in other antiracist accounts (see, in particular, Brandt, 1986; Troyna, 1987; Troyna & Williams, 1986), the next step is to assume that antiracist and multicultural approaches to education are -- by definition -- irreconcilable. McCarthy concludes, for example, that

> schools [in multicultural education accounts] are not conceptualized as sites of power or contestation in which differential interests, resources and capacities determine the manoeuvrability of competing racial groups and the possibility and pace of change. In significant ways too, proponents of multiculturalism fail to take into account the differential structure of opportunities that help to define minority relations to dominant white groups and institutions... (*ibid*: 56)

While I believe this to be so for multicultural education *as it has been popularly conceived and practised*, I do not share the necessary corollary of antiracist education literature that multicultural education is completely irredeemable. As Figueroa argues, in the British context: 'It is true that education ... even when it was meant to be 'multicultural' or

'multiracial' has not done very well by many minority ethnic peoples.... But this does not necessarily mean that 'multicultural' education as such is at fault. It may rather be that it has either not been thought through with sufficient care and thoroughness, and/or has not been adequately put into practice.' (1991: 48)

Beyond Benevolent Multiculturalism

It is clear from radical critiques that multicultural education, as popularly conceived and practised, has definite limitations. Radical theorists have argued that there would appear to be an irreducible gap between the emancipatory conception of multicultural education as cultural pluralism, and the realities of school practice(s). As Bullivant candidly observes, 'the optimism of continued reduction of inequality [for minority groups] is tempered by the realization that the cultural reproduction thesis and its variants ... still holds.' (1986: 36) If the theory and practice of multicultural education is to address these concerns it must situate the notion of cultural pluralism within a more critical conception of societal relations which takes account of the processes of social and cultural reproduction. As Olneck argues:

> If pluralism is to have any distinctive meaning or to be authentically realized, it must enhance the communal or collective lives of the groups that constitute a society and must not be limited to the expression of differences among individuals in heritage, values, and styles. Pluralism must recognize in some serious manner, the identities and claims of groups *as groups* and must facilitate, or at least symbolically represent and legitimate, collective identity. It must enhance the salience of group membership as a basis for participation in society and ensure that pedagogy, curriculum, and modes of assessment are congruent with valued cultural differences. (1990: 148)

Multicultural education's difficulty until now has been its inadequate conception of culture and its idealist conception of social and cultural relations. However, by adopting a critical perspective which recognises the power relations at work both within the school and the wider society, the multicultural education debate can be posited within an 'informing theory' (Mallea, 1989) of social and cultural reproduction. In so doing, it also needs to incorporate institutional (or structural) change. The prominent advocacy for *cultural pluralism* associated with the field needs to be complemented by an advocacy for *structural pluralism* -- that is, structural or institutional change within the school. Only

then is multicultural education likely to achieve some commensurability for ethnic minority children.

When cultural pluralism is tied to structural pluralism in this way resistance to the processes of social and cultural reproduction can be effectively mounted in schools. The result could be a genuine multicultural system which, as Harker defines it in his discussion of New Zealand education, would be one 'in which different value systems and lifestyles are accorded equal status and prestige, and wit. ull institutional alternatives.' (1990: 42) Such a system would not be limited to the knowledge code of the dominant group but would have various knowledge codes in operation. It would also have 'a variety of ways of transmitting these knowledge codes using culturally appropriate pedagogical methods, and ... a variety of options available to evaluate when successful transmission has taken place. It goes without saying that [this] system would be bilingual (or multilingual).' (*ibid*: 39-40) As Harker concludes, 'if our system is to be multicultural or even bicultural in any real sense, then we should be engaging in a fundamental re-appraisal of the structural features of the school.' (*ibid*) Hulmes comes to a similar conclusion in his discussion of British multicultural education when he suggests that an effective multiculturalism requires *organic* (rather than merely incremental) change within schools. This would include 'a thorough reassessment of curriculum content, of teaching methods and of the dominant [western] philosophy of education' (1989: 20).

A Critically Conceived Approach to Multicultural Education

Hulmes' and Harker's conclusions are echoed in recent developments in the multicultural-antiracist debate in Britain and in recent commentaries on multicultural education in the United States. In Britain the artificial juxtaposition set up between antiracist and multicultural education has been brought increasingly into question (Carrington & Short, 1989; Figueroa, 1991). As Figueroa observes:

> It is sometimes said that multiculturalism and antiracism are at opposite ends of a continuum (see, for example, Brandt 1986:114). This metaphor, however, is oversimple and distorting. Admittedly *prima facie* multiculturalism does not *necessarily* imply antiracism.... But neither is there any inherent opposition between multicultural and antiracist education. (*ibid*: 50)

Carrington & Short support this argument and also suggest that, *at the level of practice*, advocates of multicultural and antiracist education, are increasingly espousing similar (and, at times, identical) pedagogical and organisational strategies. These strategies include: whole school approaches to educational reform; collaborative teaching and learning arrangements; peer tutoring; child centred and process approaches to learning; promoting (minority) parental involvement; and fostering bilingualism and multilingualism (*ibid*: 82-101).[8]

This increasing emphasis on adopting holistic processes in antiracist and multicultural education is also reflected in recent arguments for a more critical and holistic approach to multicultural education in the United States (see, for example, Grant, 1992; Nieto, 1992). Sonia Nieto, for example, cogently argues for a 'comprehensively conceptualized approach' to multicultural education which (unlike benevolent multiculturalism) is situated within a broad 'sociopolitical context'. She defines, as follows, what such a conception of multicultural education would mean for schools:

> Multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism ... that students, their communities, and teachers represent. Multicultural education permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, as well as the interactions among teachers, students and parents, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education furthers the democratic principles of social justice. (1992: 208)

Nieto's account recognises that no school programme, no matter how broadly conceptualised, can change things completely, given the stratification and social inequities present in the wider society. However, she asserts that multicultural education, conceptualised as broad-based school reform, can offer hope for change. Having said that, she also concedes, as do many contributors to the British debate, that while 'most [recent] research on multicultural education seems to suggest ... that only by reforming the entire school environment can substantive changes in attitudes, behaviors, and achievement take place ... [m]ost schools have not undergone these changes.' (*ibid*: 253) The reasons for this are clear since such an approach -- requiring, as it does, significant structural reform at the school level -- necessarily places enormous demands on schools (and those who

teach and work within them). It may well explain why so few schools, as yet, have attempted it. Some might wonder if indeed any school could.

The position I take on multicultural education is closely aligned with the preceding analysis. However, in contrast to much previous work in this area, the following account actually examines a school -- Richmond Road School in Auckland, New Zealand -- which has successfully implemented a critically conceived approach to multicultural education. Richmond Road has undergone a process of change which has seen the total reform of its school environment: curriculum; pedagogy; assessment; and school organisation and relations, in order to achieve a meaningful multiculturalism at school level.

Richmond Road School

The educational approach of Richmond Road School has been discussed in detail in recent literature (Cazden, 1989; May, 1991; May, in press) but the characteristics of the school may be briefly outlined here. Information about Richmond Road reported here was gathered during the 1990-1992 school years from personal observation; interviews and informal discussions with the principal, current and past staff, and friends of the school; and from the extensive documentation the school has itself collected and chronicled on its educational approach.

Richmond Road School is situated in the inner city area of Auckland, New Zealand and is a multi-ethnic state primary (elementary) school. The school has approximately 200 pupils and 18 (full-time and part-time) teaching staff. Most of the pupils at the school represent non-dominant groups in New Zealand society, principally of Māori and Pacific Island origin. The school's ethnic composition, as of March 1993, comprised: 17% Māori; 15% Pākehā (European New Zealanders); 22% Samoan; 18% Cook Island; 9% Tongan; 9% Niuean. Other significant ethnic groups included: 5% Indian; 4% Chinese. There is a similarly multi-ethnic staff, including representatives of most of the cultural groups to which the majority of pupils belong.

Cultural and ethnic differences permeate every facet of school life at Richmond Road. The multicultural nature of the school is evident as soon as one enters the door. Māori and Pacific Island motifs and displays feature prominently throughout the school. Māori and

Pacific Island pupils and staff are also clearly visible and, along with English, Māori and a variety of Pacific Island languages are heard regularly in rooms and corridors. While this might appear little different from many other inner-city schools, what distinguishes Richmond Road is that this diversity of language and culture is formalised within the structures of the school. The school has on site, for example: a Kōhanga Reo (a Māori language pre-school immersion unit; literally, 'language nest') that has been operating since 1985: an A'oga Fa'a Samoa (Samoan language pre-school) that started in the first term of 1989; and Te Apii Reo Kuki Airani (a Cook Island language pre-school) that started in 1990. These pre-school units aim to foster their respective minority languages through full immersion teaching and are part of the recent emergence in New Zealand of such programmes. Other English speaking pre-school units in the area also contribute to the school's clientele.

The school itself offers a range of language-based programmes. These include a Māori bilingual programme begun in 1984, a Samoan bilingual programme which has been operating since 1987, and a Cook Island bilingual programme which began in 1991. There are also two English language programmes operating, as well as an inner city second language unit, established in 1976, which caters for recent arrivals to New Zealand and teaches them English through the mother tongue. All these programmes are arranged in vertical rōpū (group(s); see below) which include the full range of pupils. The remainder of this paper attempts to identify the key characteristics of the school that have led it to develop and successfully implement a whole-school approach to multicultural education.

Language

The bilingual structures the school has adopted suggest that the role of languages in the school is central to Richmond Road's approach to multicultural education. Establishing a critically conceived approach to multiculturalism at the school started here. However, teachers within the school also argue that the fostering of language(s) cannot be separated from the cultural context from which it springs, nor from the type of society one would wish to see result (Richmond Road School, 1983). Accordingly, Richmond Road locates its view of the role of languages in the school within a wider frame of reference that recognises and affirms cultural respect, autonomy, and difference through the structures of the school. The school's bilingual structure is determined within this broader context.

Fostering language is important, but the cultural context which language represents and from which it comes should never be lost from sight. To this end, the school endorses Baker's observation that 'to support a language without supporting its attendant culture is to fund an expensive life-support machine attached to someone culturally dead or dying' (1988: 100).

The children's use of their first language, however, is encouraged wherever possible within the school and, in the case of the Māori, Samoan, and Cook Island bilingual programmes, is formalised in a bilingual curriculum. The bilingual rōpū (groups(s)) are based on a dual-medium approach to language. During half of each morning and every other afternoon, the teachers speak only the minority language and children are encouraged to respond in the same language. At other times English is spoken. When the minority language is in use, however, pupils are not required to speak the language prescribed if they do not wish to. As Cazden (1989) observes, this might be a weakness of the programmes since low status languages such as these need as much support as possible within the school to avoid being swamped beyond it. The school's approach is consistent though with its broader conception of the role of language(s). It also accords with the identification of choice as a crucial variable in the success of bilingual programmes (see Cummins, 1983) and simply extends that notion to include children as well as parents and the wider community. Moreover, the bilingual ethos of the school clearly endorses a maintenance rather than a transitional view of bilingual education (see Appel & Muysken, 1987; Baker, 1988). As the previous principal, Laughton eloquently argued, 'Bilingual education ... wisely conceived [can] make a difference -- as an act of respect and humility by the powerful, as an expression of confidence and determination by the powerless, [and] as an exercise in genuine communication among all'. (1985a: 1)

The importance of the mother-tongue, then, permeates the language philosophy of the school. Language and culture are regarded as an area of strength and competency for all children and the teachers recognise and acknowledge Ken Goodman's observation that if as teachers they undermine a child's language, they also undermine that child's ability to learn (Richmond Road School, 1983).

Rōpū

Also central to the school's approach to multicultural education is the arrangement of these various language programmes in rōpū. Rōpū are vertical groups based on the Māori whānau (extended family) model, and the New Zealand non-graded rural school. Each rōpū consists of the entire range of pupils from New Entrants (age 5) through to Form 2 (age 12). Children stay in the same rōpū, with the same teachers, throughout their primary schooling. Parents are initially given the choice of which rōpū they wish their children to go into. This overcomes the significant problem of ambivalence or confusion for parents as to the role of home languages in the school (Corson, 1990) because parents are able to identify clearly what Richmond Road offers in comparison to other local schools and can then make their choice within the variety of language structures the school itself offers. Teachers have the same pupils for eight years and this means that staff come to know the families particularly well, further fostering community and school interchange over this time.

The vertical/family groupings of children and the various language options they represent have arisen from the vision of the previous principal, Jim Laughton, to see the school curriculum reflect the ethnic diversity of the community it serves (for a discussion of his influence, see Cazden, 1989; May, in press). Laughton saw such groupings as a means of giving 'institutionalised power' to minority children who might otherwise not have had access to it in a society where dominant power relations are perpetuated through schooling. His aim was to increase the alternatives for minority children through the rōpū structure by:

(1) increasing the age and ability range with which children were in contact;

(2) providing children with opportunities to experience a variety of roles and to develop an appropriate range of social skills and;

(3) assisting the growth of self respect through the recognition of ethnic diversity and the wide range of skills, interests and cultural perspectives children would bring to the group as a whole.

Such an organisation, he argued, gives more power and choices to everyone. There is more room for independence but this is paralleled by the expectation that responsibility towards the whole group be accepted. A collective school document outlines the process:

> inherent within the whānau organisation is the integration of belief systems which emphasize group rather than individual values. If cultural maintenance is to be a priority at Richmond Road School then stress must be placed on values which contribute to the strength of the group as a whole rather than on those which are individualistic. This kind of system is necessary to support cultural transmission in the curriculum. (Richmond Road School, 1986: 3)

Cultural features which emphasise collectivism take precedence over those which are individualistic, thus forming the basis for the characteristic ethos of the school -- cooperation rather than competition. Acceptance of this kind of responsibility is inherent in family group organisation; socially, by demonstrating care for others, and educationally through peer support activities such as paired reading. The latter activity, for example, sees children with competency at one reading level involved in working with children who are at other stages of development. This encourages the growth of skills which will lead to independence within a supportive, cooperative environment and is consistent with the values of the minority cultures of many of the students.[9]

Staff Collaboration

The relational commitment which whānau structures foster within the school is also seen in the collective approach to teaching that has been adopted by the staff. The largely open plan setting of the school allows for most of the rōpū to be taught in shared spaces, and a principle of the school is that there always be two teachers in every room. This allows the rōpū to be further divided into home groups. Home groups are the basic teaching groups, and it is the pupils in them that are monitored and reported on to parents by individual teachers. The presently favourable staff to student ratio sees these groups comprise approximately 20 pupils. However, the rōpū can effectively operate with greatly increased numbers (as they have done in the past) because of the varied individual and collective teaching arrangements, and the variety of resources available at all levels (see below). The shared teaching and the instructional peer relationships characteristic of the rōpū may, in fact, actually be inhibited by a lack of numbers because children of different ages and ability in the vertical groups are thinly spread.

The team teaching approach that the rōpū structure demands requires a highly structured timetable so that pupils can become familiar with daily routines and can gain security from knowing what comes next. Pupils will know, for example, that at certain times each day

they do particular activities. Each day may vary in what it offers, depending on the overall balance of the weekly programme, but children are always aware of what any given day holds for them. Hodson (1986) argues that children learn best in this type of secure environment where they can explore, test, share, communicate, and develop their ideas in an atmosphere of trusted confidence. He goes on to suggest that teachers will best achieve a revolution in their own curriculum understanding and expertise if they adopt similar methods. This collectivity is very apparent in the staff of Richmond Road, and it also encompasses the management of the school where the principal and the two associate principals work collaboratively as an administrative team. The associate principals rotate this responsibility, spending two weeks in a class they share with another teacher, and two weeks in the office. This ensures that the administration does not lose touch with what is happening in the classroom and aims to prevent potential isolation between those who administer and those who teach in the school. Responsibility is shared, and non-hierarchical relationships are emphasised. As the current principal, Lionel Pedersen, argues, the aim of the school is to break down pedagogical isolation by rejecting artificial class grouping by age and through shared administration and teaching.

Curriculum Development

This collaboration is closely allied with staff development generally and curriculum development in particular. Teachers are released every morning to look at curriculum issues. Staff meetings, which are held every Tuesday after school and regularly continue into early evening, focus on cooperation and staff development. This involvement in curriculum development by staff is also supported through the organisation of staff into curriculum teams which deliberately cut across the rōpū teaching teams. Curriculum teams develop resources for the curriculum during the course of the year (these resources must include all ethnic groups represented in the school community), supervise these materials, and provide support for staff working in other areas. Teachers prepare these resources at ten levels of reading independence, and children are able to use the material without the teacher's control or superimposed opinions about what the outcomes will be. This allows children opportunities to explore ideas in a variety of different ways, either individually or cooperatively, and according to their own style, preference, and interest. If a child at one level of literacy, for example, wants access to resource material at a higher level, she or he can negotiate with another child at the appropriate level of literacy

for that activity. Each child knows his or her own level of reading independence and those of others within the rōpū because the information is displayed on charts, not, as in many cases, as a means of ranking, but rather, as a means of identifying for children whom they can go to for support and whom they can assist.

Reading

Each reading level is organised into four different learning arrangements: superior/inferior; cooperative; collaborative; and independent. **Superior/inferior arrangements** are those which usually characterise the school curriculum. One person, who is almost always the teacher, conveys information to those who lack it, the pupils. Richmond Road accepts that superior/inferior arrangements are a part of educational life but does not endorse the notion that the teacher should always occupy the former position. A pupil or a parent may be recognised as having expertise in a particular field (such as a particular language or culture) which they can be called upon to impart in the classroom. The contrast between these two approaches is captured by R.S Peters' (1973) distinction between assigned and provisional authority. Assigned authority focuses on the responsibility of the teacher to dispense knowledge while provisional authority is described by Peters as that held by the person 'who knows the most' in a given situation. As Cazden observes, 'whoever has knowledge [at Richmond Road] teaches' (1989: 151). **Cooperative arrangements** put children into shared situations where they support each other while completing a task. These groups are usually self chosen and encompass a wide range of skills and ability. They foster the notion of cooperation rather than competition and aim to reduce children's fear of failure through an active participation in a supportive system which demands corporate rather than individual accountability. **Collaborative arrangements** bring children together in situations which require shared understanding because the pupils involved have different information that must be put together to complete a task. This involves children in sharing information, negotiating meaning, and debate, until consensus is reached. Children are free to express a wide range of their own ideas, beliefs, values, and attitudes in order to produce a shared conclusion, although it is the process of negotiation rather than the eventual outcome which is emphasised. **Independent arrangements** allow every child the opportunity to operate individually at her or his own speed and level, with materials suited to individual needs and interests. In this way, independence is developed and the child is encouraged to take responsibility for his or her own learning. This learning

is still, however, tied to the underlying principle of cooperation because it aims to encourage the acceptance of responsibility for knowledge already held, rather than independent learning at the expense of others. Encompassing all the various learning strategies are resource materials designed to introduce concepts, theme approaches, and base stories to the whole group. This gives the coherence and continuity necessary for drawing together the variety of activities in which children can be involved.

Monitoring

The accurate matching of instructional materials to the child's levels of reading competence is an essential prerequisite for all these learning arrangements and requires ongoing monitoring to ensure that accurate matching does occur. Regular oversight of individual reading is maintained within home groups, and running records of children's reading progress are kept. These records include not only reading levels but also skills or cues used, needed, or misused. The instructional level, for example, where a child reads fluently, independently and with understanding, requires 95% accuracy with at least a 1:3 self correction rate, while the easy reading level (for library and taking home) is 98-100% accuracy.

Laughton states that the monitoring process can determine this because it 'entails observation of behaviour in familiar contexts using familiar processes, [but is] often focused on unfamiliar content' (1985b: 1). Its purpose is to find out how the pupil operates, and the function of familiarity 'is to facilitate access to underlying competence, imperfectly reflected at best in the student's performance' (*ibid*). Laughton argues that monitoring should, as a result, replace testing as the principal form of assessment in schools because the latter is more concerned with finding out what a pupil does not know and is, as such, intrinsically less effective in gauging the competencies and skills of students. Historically, also, assessment based on testing has played the role of legitimising the disabling of minority students (Cummins, 1986).

Writing

Finally, Richmond Road's approach to written language incorporates ideals and strategies similar to those adopted in reading. Koch's (1982) description of the writing process as

'learned terror' for many children is recognised as characteristic of many approaches to writing in schools, and is specifically avoided by Richmond Road. Emphasis is placed, instead, on making writing fun. Writing is de-emphasised as a separate activity and encouraged as a necessary part of other curriculum activities. This accords with the principle of language experience, which characterises the language programme as a whole, where children are encouraged to develop and expand language in the context of experiences, books, and/or events. Closely allied to this is the recognition of children as experts in the writing process. The different cultural, linguistic and personal responses children incorporate into learning to write -- and the experimentation necessarily involved in such a process -- are encouraged, while the notion of teaching a correct writing model is discounted. As a result, a variety of writing activities are employed: private writing; supported writing; and cooperative writing. **Private writing** is characterised by little, if any, teacher correction. Children are encouraged to express themselves freely in writing and to view writing, accordingly, as an effective means of personal communication. A time is set aside each day for writing of this kind. Private writing is not corrected and is only shared at the child's discretion. Private writing can also include pre-writing or rehearsal which emphasises for children the developmental nature of the writing process. **Supported writing** involves providing a framework for writing such as the retelling of favourite stories, the completion of stories, or the writing of stories from a different point of view. Whatever framework is adopted, however, support is always available to the children when required. **Cooperative writing** has children working together in accomplishing a task which includes written work. All these writing varieties (along with those established for reading) are employed in the construction and use of curriculum resources.

Conclusion

Taken together, all of these aspects of Richmond Road's educational approach attempt to break the cycle of marginalisation for minority groups in schooling. Their development within the school has also been closely allied with the expectations and participation of the local school community. Ethnic groups within the community are drawn on for their cultural expertise in the development and, at times, teaching of resources. The language immersion preschools, which are community run, provide direct links between the school and local ethnic groups, and many of their children go on to the bilingual rōpū within the school. Parents are welcome to observe or participate in the rōpū at any time, and often

do so, while school functions are always strongly supported. This degree of parental involvement is the exception rather than the rule in most schools, but it is particularly unusual for minority parents, who often feel alienated by the school process. Parental involvement and the prominent place of ethnic minority groups within the school are also reflected in its managing body, the Board of Trustees, which has a majority of Māori and Pacific Island representatives.

What has resulted at Richmond Road School is an approach to multicultural education that has sought to reconstitute the school environment to the *real* educational advantage of minority students. In implementing these ideas, certain values are prerequisite: difference is never equated with deficiency; co-operation is fostered not competition; cultural respect is seen as essential to developing a pluralistic society; and the school's function to this end is directed towards increasing a child's options rather than changing them. The reasons for the success of the multicultural structures which operate at Richmond Road can be summarised by the following characteristics:

- **The various school structures have been developed over many years.** Establishing an informed and effective approach to multicultural education, and the talking and working through of structural change which that requires, is neither a short nor easy process.

- **The process of change has involved staff cooperatively and collaboratively** and has led to a significant coherence and consistency across the curriculum and a great deal of mutual support among teachers (Cazden, 1989) as well as seeing the discussion of curriculum issues as a natural part of school life.

- **A high degree of theoretical literacy has developed among teachers.** In fact, a knowledge of educational theory is regarded as the essential prerequisite to achieving an effective multiculturalism at Richmond Road. Pedersen, the principal, argues that there is no substitute for wide teacher knowledge, and suggests that the result has been an enormous accumulation of knowledge among the staff on the nature and process of teaching.

> - This conversancy with theory has resulted in an approach to multicultural education which 'move[s] beyond theorising about our practice along the lines of 'this works for me' ... to ask questions instead about why we act as we do, and whose interests are served by continuing in this manner' (Smyth, 1989: 57).

The structural changes implemented at Richmond Road demonstrate that multicultural education can be effectively (and critically) reconceived in order to make a difference for minority children. Richmond Road's ability to link critical theory with practice through whole-school reform moves us a long way forward from the concerns expressed over benevolent approaches to multicultural education. It also suggests that the new directions argued for more recently in the literature are achievable. Admittedly, the demands on schools (organisationally, pedagogically and relationally) for such a task are great -- that cannot be denied -- but Richmond Road shows at least that it can be done. There may be hope for multicultural education after all.

Notes

1. The ideas discussed in this paper are explored in much greater detail in my forthcoming book *Making Multicultural Education Work* (May, in press).

2. 'Equality of opportunity' is a problematic term in educational discourse. In much of the research on minority education it has been assumed to mean the same as 'equity'. This is not the case. Rather, as Grant & Miller argue, '"Equal opportunity", meaning having equal access [to education] is not synonymous with "equity" which means having fair and just opportunity' (1992: 14). Figueroa argues, along similar lines, that if the term 'equality' is to be rehabilitated to include a real notion of equity it 'should include equal respect and equitable treatment for *difference*.... Rather than sameness, equality means fairness - that is, giving full recognition to everyone's rights and legitimate needs, and inseparably taking into account relevant similarities and relevant differences, relevant resources and relevant disadvantages.' (1991: 59)

3. The terms 'cultural pluralism' and 'multicultural education' are not synonymous, although the promotion of cultural pluralism is often advocated by exponents of multicultural education, and distinctions between the terms consequently become vague. The conceptual overlap of these terms is characteristic of the terminological vagary associated with the field (see below).

4. While focusing primarily on the plight of ethnic minorities, the term in North American discourse has also come to include, for some protagonists, members of all marginalised groups. What constitutes the basis of marginalisation, however, is not always made clear (see Banks, 1988; Banks & Lynch, 1986; Gibson, 1976; Sleeter & Grant, 1987).

5. Taha Māori attempted to formalise the inclusion of aspects of Māori culture into New Zealand's common curriculum. The initiative quickly foundered, however, because of the demonstrated ambivalence of both Māori and Pākehā [New Zealanders of European origin] towards it, albeit for different reasons. The former were ambivalent because of its exclusion of Māori language, its additive approach to the curriculum (see below) and its peripheral position in most schools. The latter viewed it, more often than not, as a threat or at least a distraction from the 'real' concerns of a Pākehā education.

6. An emphasis on life-styles in multicultural education has seen the rapid development of 'heritage' approaches to culture and cultural difference(s). As Bullivant argues, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with such approaches as long as their limitations are realised. Heritage approaches tend to emphasise the expressive over the instrumental in conceptions of culture; emphasise the histories of ethnic groups but have little to say on their current circumstances and concerns within society (and the real nature of that society), and in so doing; promote the preservation of a fossilised view of the culture(s) of ethnic groups in the minds of both minority *and majority* groups.

7. An emphasis on cultural differences as a means of educating *all* children, rather than reducing racism and discrimination as is its intention, may in fact act to confirm them by entrenching the perceived differences between 'us' and 'them' (see Bullivant, 1986; Crozier, 1989).

8. Each of these strategies will be explored more fully in the ensuing account on Richmond Road School.

9. Individualism is not diminished within this approach. Rather, individualism *as competitive isolation* -- a peculiarly western conception -- is re-conceptualised within the broader context of mutual accountability.

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